

June 6, 2022

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
H-204, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leader McCarthy:

The American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) writes to express its support for H.R. 7776, the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2022 and encourages its swift passage in the House of Representatives. Our nation's levees, dams, inland waterways, and ports infrastructure systems are critical for public safety, strong business, economic growth, and the preservation and enhancement of our environmental resources. These systems protect hundreds of communities, support millions of American jobs, and generate trillions of dollars of economic activity. However, many of these infrastructure assets have reached the end of their design life, and the investment gap must be closed if we hope to both repair and modernize these infrastructure systems to be competitive in the 21st century.

ASCE would like to express our appreciation to the leaders on the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee for keeping WRDA on its biennial schedule. WRDA provides an opportunity to demonstrate effective bipartisan action to support the development and strengthening of the nation's water infrastructure. The biennial schedule also provides the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) with a degree of predictability which allows for more effective planning and development of vital USACE projects nationwide.

Several provisions in this year's WRDA are critical to ensuring that the nation's water infrastructure is built to withstand increasingly harsh conditions, provide more effective services to the American people, and protect the health and safety of communities. H.R. 7776 provides an opportunity to build on progress made over the past several years and provides new opportunities for growth.

First, ASCE strongly supports WRDA's proposal to reauthorize the National Levee Safety Program through Fiscal Year (FY) 2026. The National Levee Safety Program, which was first authorized in 2014, is tasked with establishing national levee safety guidelines, supporting levee rehabilitation efforts, assisting in standing up levee safety programs at the state level, and providing technical assistance for effective management of the nation's levees. Every state relies on levees to protect communities from flooding. However, the average age of the nation's levees is over 50 years old, with many having been built without the benefit of current robust codes and

standards. ASCE estimates that moderate-to-high risk levees under the purview of USACE require approximately \$21 billion in improvements to ensure public safety. The National Levee Safety Program plays a vital role in supporting the safety of the nation's levees; however, it is set to expire at the end of FY 2023. Reauthorization of this critical program was a top priority for ASCE during consideration of this year's WRDA, and we appreciate the committee's efforts take on this challenge. In addition, ASCE supports a provision in the House bill which would require USACE to conduct an assessment of levees which fall within its purview.

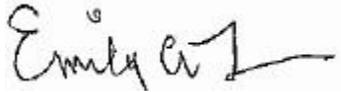
ASCE also supports efforts to increase the resilience of our nation's infrastructure systems. As climate change continues to create increasingly severe and unpredictable weather patterns, including increased levels of precipitation, it is critical to ensure that dams, levees, wastewater, and stormwater systems are designed and built to withstand harsher conditions. This year's WRDA addresses these challenges in several ways, including authorizing USACE to restore shore protection projects or structures beyond original design levels, reporting requirements on infrastructure resiliency, and inclusion of tidal and inland flooding for consideration within feasibility studies for coastal storm risk reduction projects

Additionally, ASCE appreciates the bill's attention to dredging activities, including a provision authorizing environmental dredging activity to remove contaminated sediment on certain projects, and reporting requirements on current public and private dredge capacity and availability to meet the nation's dredging needs as well as costs and effects of increasing harbor depths. ASCE supports efforts to enhance dredging activity, which will help to address the \$12 billion waterside infrastructure funding gap. These efforts will help to enhance economic activity, advance environmental justice, and create new job opportunities.

Finally, ASCE supports efforts made in WRDA to address the safety of the nation's dams. ASCE's *2021 Report Card for America's Infrastructure* gave the condition of our nation's dams a "D" grade. According to the Association of State Dam Safety Officials, more than \$75 billion is needed to address the conditions of the nation's non-federal dams and ASCE is encouraged by provisions in the House's WRDA to address certain dam safety issues. Specifically, ASCE supports the establishment of a national inventory of low-head dams, which are small, man-made structures that stretch across riverways which produce flows that can create strong yet undetectable currents, posing a significant public hazard. An accurate inventory of low-head dams will support public safety and ensure greater awareness of the danger posed by these structures. H.R. 7776 also requires USACE to conduct an assessment of dams within its purview, which will allow for rehabilitation efforts to be properly catalogued and referred to the appropriate lawmakers in Congress. Unfortunately, H.R. 7776 does not include a reauthorization of the National Dam Safety Program, which is set to expire at the end of FY 2023, so we encourage the House of Representatives to make this reauthorization a top priority in the coming year.

We thank you again for the House's efforts to bring WRDA to the floor in a timely manner and encourage all Members to vote Yes on final passage of H.R. 7776. Congress must continue to prioritize investment needs for water infrastructure systems to protect public health, ensure a strong economy, and build a modern, efficient network of infrastructure that can compete on a global stage.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Emily A. Feenstra". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Emily A. Feenstra
Chief Policy and External Affairs Officer
American Society of Civil Engineers

cc:

Hon. Peter DeFazio, Chairman, House Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure

Hon. Sam Graves, Ranking Member, House Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure

Hon. Grace F. Napolitano, Chairwoman, House Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure
Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment

Hon. David Rouzer, Ranking Member, House Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure
Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment